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Improving Analytical Support to the Warfighter: Campaign Assessments, Operational Analysis, and Data Management

Working Group 2
Campaign Assessments

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19 – 22 April 2010

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This slide shows the purpose of the working group. In short, our intent is to improve the process for the conduct of campaign level assessment, leveraging the experience of the working group members. The subject of campaign assessment was not limited to the current ongoing operations, though irregular warfare figured largely in our discussions.

Background

Assessments are critical for an organization to understand how well the organization performs its mission; both what it produces as an output and what it achieves as an outcome. Assessments provide a rigorous analytic bridge between the functioning activities of the organization and those decisions necessary to make improvement; often articulated in policies and plans. Assessments often can help identify opportunities for vertical alignment of goals and objectives and the horizontal integration of capabilities to achieve those goals and objectives. The end result of assessments is to continuously improve how well the organization achieves its goals and objectives and to provide opportunities to innovate. Assessments must follow a comprehensive approach that is multidisciplinary, multinational, and interagency. Assessments have a role to play before, during, and after an operation and can significantly improve overall performance of the organization. Useful assessments frequently become a management center of gravity, especially under conditions of scrutiny.

Useful means several things. Aligned and integrated assessments within a theater must speak with one voice, establish manageable expectations, and serve many masters. First and foremost, assessments must serve the commander and support decision making. Assessments must add value "down and in" to the subordinate commanders whose assets are being tasked to collect and analyze. Assessments must support reporting requirements "up and out", often through multiple chains of command to national governments in order to satisfy national security objectives. The proper alignment and integration of assessments is critical to achieve one voice and minimize competition among messages and across resources.

Despite the critical role that assessments play, organizations frequently treat assessments as an afterthought. Assessment capabilities are often recognized as lacking well after deployment and are subsequently generated out of the institutional force as a temporary loan. A lack of "operating force" assessment doctrine and analytic structure at echelons above corps may contribute to this assessment lag. As an analytic community, we need to engender continuous support for effective and useful assessments as part of the standing operating force – on hand, trained, and ready both in war and in peace. We must apply our own tool sets to build the arguments that demonstrate the benefit of effective and useful assessments. We must build the case to create flexible assessment doctrine to serve as a common basis and start point for individual tailoring to the unique circumstances of the mission and the commander"s needs. The doctrine must leverage lessons-learned. We must build the analytic force structure at echelons above corps so we are trained and ready to support the Combatant Commander prior to kick-off.

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The approach of the working group was to work toward a set of goals, or objectives, designed to drive discussion in the areas we are focused upon.

The schedule of the working group was as follows, along with the areas we intended to discuss:

Wednesday, 21 April 2010
Session I: Approaches to Campaign Assessments
Moderator: MAJ Greg Boylan
Speakers/Panelists:
• Mr Scott Sanborn (Afghan Assessment Group, ISAF)
• Mr Rick Starkey (CENTCOM J-8)
• LTC Dave Sanders (Center for Army Analysis)

Presentation and Discussion Topics:
• Assessment techniques. What is meaningful in an IW environment?
• Theater Assessment vs Campaign Assessment - what is the difference?
• Unilateral vs multilateral Assessments (ie; NSC vs JFC Brunssum, US vs ISAF
• Catering to all Assessment audiences in an information/methodology poor but communication rich environment

1300 – 1700
Session II: Approaches to Campaign Assessments
Moderator: MAJ Greg Boylan
Speakers / Panelist:
• Lieutenant Colonel Jack Ware (CAA – Haiti experience)
• Dr. Robert Hannan (SOUTHCOM)
• Mr. Bill Hershberger (EUCOM)

Topics:
• Identify the challenges associated with providing useful assessment information
• Identifying significantly useful data
• Sufficient data collection (balanced across the lines of effort, more than Military Intelligence)
• Minimizing the burden on the warfighter (aligning operations, decisive conditions, goals)
• Common authoritative data (transparency)
• Identifying common threads of Campaign level assessments
• EAD Assessment structure requirements
• Who should be responsible for assessments? Planners/Operators, ORSAs, intel analysts? All three?
• Campaign Assessment Doctrine and Training (or lack thereof)

Thursday, 22 April 2010
0800 – 1200
Session III: Integrated Campaign Assessments
0800 – 1000
Moderator: LTC David Sanders
Speakers/Panelists:
• MAJ Greg Boylan (USARPAC – 25th ID OIF experience)
• Mr Steve Goode (CAA – OSD Policy experience)

Topics:
• Integrating Assessments – NSC to BCT level
• Integration between levels: tactical, operational, strategic, and national security level

1000 – 1200: Working group wrap up and out-brief review.

The two goals shown on this slide were not achieved during the conference, but are important steps forward to achieve a "professional" assessment capability for the operating force. Joint doctrine is key. While Departments play a critical role providing the means, campaign assessments must be prepared to address the questions of the Combatant Commander – from the overarching political framework in which the mission executes down to the tactical detail that can shift international opinion and support. Assessment doctrine should be stand-alone publications – easily referenced, commonly taught across all Departments. Assessment doctrine will not only teach analysts and staff how to conduct campaign assessments, it will teach future commanders on the rich capability and value that campaign assessments provide the mission.

Findings
Assessment Attributes

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Independent evolutions of campaign assessment capabilities appear to possess common characteristics
- Must support and be owned by the Commander to be useful
- Simple is preferred; analytical rigor is essential
- Comprehensive approach is essential
- Assessment framework helps to align, integrate and focus effort
- Review board mechanism allows for functional, multinational, multiagency integration, inclusion, and buy-in
- Transparency significantly increases usefulness and informs strategic communications
- Assessments must include and conclude with recommended solutions

Lack of doctrine inhibits responsiveness and effectiveness

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The assessment is performed for more than one purpose, and the purpose and technique used to conduct it is specific to each commander. The purposes identified for the conduct of assessments are:

1. Evaluating the progress toward accomplishment of the mission by the commander
2. Communication of what is occurring to a larger audience outside of the command – not only to higher headquarters but to the media, the public, the US Congress, Coalition nations, and the host nation.
3. Synchronizing the staff, which is often overworked and at many times stove piped. An effort to bring the evaluation of overall progress together forces interaction between the joint and combined headquarters, embassies from the contributing nations, and the Host Nation.

In order to perform these missions, it is critical the commander shape the process, and demand that it be done rigorously.

A comprehensive approach is necessary. This not only means a holistic assessment of the campaign objectives, but the inclusion of the many players toward their accomplishment. As mentioned, the comprehensive approach is multidisciplinary, multinational and interagency. Achieving the comprehensive approach requires significant effort and a cultural shift by the military to recognize the virtues and values of all partners. We must endeavor to pull down cultural barriers and adapt to the specific needs and concerns of other nations and agencies wherever possible.

A transparent assessment process is necessary, transparent to both the staff and to external audiences. This transparency will facilitate understanding and buy in, and will have the added benefit of reducing redundant information requests placed upon the command.

Doctrine, developed prior to a contingency, trained in our schoolhouses, integrated into our interagency partners, would facilitate better assessments in the future, and lower the amount of re-learning each time a new commander arrives, a unit conducts a relief in place / transfer of authority, or a new contingency develops.

Findings Challenges

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- Each venture appears to be a new-start – insufficient doctrine to guide a common approach for the conduct of assessments
- The assessment must be owned by the commander, and provide value.
- Functional – the functional expert, supported by an analyst, assuming responsibility for their portion of the assessment
  - Assessments are considered Operations Research Systems Analysis work – it is the work of the staff to support the Commander
  - ORSAs being able to provide both analysis and assessment support
- Interagency – cultural and business practice differences
- Multinational – cultural and business practice differences
- Supporting versus Supported role – being a good collaborator and the need to tear down walls prior to deployment
- Transparency – impediment to collaboration, integration, and messaging
- Campaign assessments may possess a strategic, operational, and/or tactical assessment component – collapsing layers

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The challenges to the commanders in theater to conduct assessments have expanded greatly. Understanding what is important in the context of irregular war, stability operations, and disaster relief operations is much more complex than understanding what is important in a major conventional operation. The lack of doctrine and formal training, and the lack of knowledge of the effect on non-kinetic operations greatly compounds the assessment challenge. Each new commander, regardless of theater level to brigade level, often reshapes what he needs for „assessments". This flux, while necessary to provide a commander what he needs to make decisions today, seriously impacts our ability to both show changes over time and to understand what should be done in the future.

Assessments, as earlier stated, provide several functions – whether or not they are recognized as providing that function by those conducting them. These functions can be valuable to the commander and his staff, or they can be detrimental if they are not aligned to other required and ongoing reporting functions.

It is critical that the assessment not be performed by an „assessment" cell which is not in contact with those performing the function, developing the objectives, and having responsibility to effect the outcome. The functional responsible, for example in the are of rule of law, is the expert, and an analyst will never have the understanding of that functional. An analyst can help to structure the process, assist in identifying measureable metrics, and assist in structuring the data – qualitative or quantitative – that can be used in determining the current status. OR analysts are a scarce quantity – and while they can contribute a significant amount to the development and conduct of assessments, it also prevents them from doing other analysis that deployed commands require.

However, OR analysts can help lead the staff effort to build the commander"s assessment. The OR community should step up to the plate and assume the responsibility to "design" assessment doctrine, gain the authority to lead and oversee the conduct of assessments on behalf of the commander, and be held accountable to deliver. While a monumental task, assessments placed under the commander, deputy commander, or chief of staff provides the mechanism for accountability.

In the Joint, Coalition, interagency, International environment we have a clash of cultures and business practices. This clash often results in a lack of participation and a dominance of assessments being conducted by the military. The lack of understanding of the military on many of the functions being performed makes it problematic to capture a clear understanding of the environment for a current status, and limits effective modifications to plans and identification of solutions to current and future issues.

Assessment techniques, and the personal who conduct assessments, are often not well integrated prior to deploying to theater. Working within the environment prior to a deployment helps significantly, and can assist with developing realistic expectations by all involved.

Findings
Challenges

- Metric Flux – a result of discovery learning as we go…
- Data Collection and Knowledge Management
  - Availability
  - Access
  - Uniformity through universal definitions and negotiated pull procedures
  - Authoritative data source
  - Transparency
  - Data type – non-kinetic, human behavior, political, etc.
  - Collection burden
  - Usefulness – the difference between what we are collecting, what we should collect and what we ultimately can collect
    - Leading indicators (of change) needed
- Complexity combining quantitative, qualitative, and polling data
- Displaying information effectively
- Providing value both "up and out" and "down and in"

One of the key challenges, as mentioned earlier, is the fundamental lack of understanding of the IW operating environment. One of the results of this lack of academic and operational knowledge is a consistent change to assessment processes. This flux causes a lack of consistent assessments, leading to lack of an ability to determine progress, and also leading to a lack of consistent data over time that can be used to further our understanding.

Data collection is both necessary and extremely challenging. The pace of operations of any staff on a daily basis does not facilitate good record keeping. Data which is developed for one action is often lost and must be recreated to perform the same task at a later date. Each organization stores data in ways that are conducive to their use of the data – and often that method changes with the skill set of the person performing the work. ORSAs can assist in providing structure, and in helping others to understand that historical record keeping is critical. Collection of data is not only a burden, but also will mean that other activities are not conducted. Ensuring we have the right metrics, supported by the right, and not excessive, data is necessary.

Enormous opportunity exists to develop practical and meaningful methods to combine quantitative, qualitative and polling data. This is a significant area for potential research and partnership with academia. This should become a focused community of effort within the joint military operations research community.

The display of information likewise is a significant area for potential research and partnership with academia. This should become a focused community of effort within the joint military operations research community.

Finally – if we tax others to provide data – we should deliver back to them – "Down and In" – a meaningful and useful product that can help them guide their operations. We rarely do this and we must get better and delivering not only "Up and Out" but also "Down and In."

Opportunities/ Recommendations

- Develop joint doctrine that is multinational and interagency informed
  - Definitions
  - Processes
  - Products (Assessment plan, Assessment report, STRATCOM support)
- Create an expeditionary assessment capability at echelons above corps
  - Lead assessment training in time of peace
  - Coordinate with the interagency community in order to be prepared
  - Deploy in time of crisis
- Train the force on the campaign assessment process
- Develop a "seed" set of measures and identify the data that will support expected lines of operations that IW will likely address
- Develop useful analytic methods and tools to support the above
- Leverage the interest and capabilities of the academic community

Development of doctrine, or refinement of the small amount of doctrine that does exist, is critical. This will, over time, reshape our commanders thinking, ensure the training of our staffs, and make inherent the process of ensuring measureable progress is built into our plans.

Those who conduct assessments in theater were not trained to perform those functions. A standing assessment capability would assist a JTF as it deploys, and can work with staffs prior to deployments to ensure they understand what will be important on a type of operation in terms of assessments – so that once arriving in theater the unit can immediately begin understanding the environment instead of exploring what may or may not be pertinent. This will also assist us in data collection – the mechanisms can be in place and the need understood prior to deploying to theater.

Training the force on campaign assessments goes hand in hand with doctrine development. Once we have established a framework that is adaptable the unit deploying can be trained, and that staff can adapt the framework to what is needed. The experience from those who do the training can facilitate this effort.

This CAMPAIGN ASSESSMENT TRIAD of DOCTRINE, "Operating Force" STRUCTURE, and TRAINING is essential and must be developed quickly. Failure to do so condemns us to repeat our mistakes, continue our repetitive discovery learning each time, and fail to deliver responsive and effective assessments before, during, and after the operation at hand.

A comprehensive method to conduct assessments is needed now. One of the challenges to this is laying out a definition of terms so that across the joint, combined, and international community we can understand each other. This terms of reference cannot be a DoD only document – understanding the culture and terms used by our interagency partners is as critical as their understanding of ours.

The process to develop more vigorous assessment doctrine needs to start now. A critical part of this is the ownership of this problem. It cannot lie in a theater in conflict, and it cannot lie within one service. The joint community must take this on if it is to be fixed, and each service must identify a responsible party to champion the effort.

Training of those preparing to deploy, who will be involved in the assessment process, from a functional or analytical role, must be conducted. Personnel assigned to COCOMs who conduct assessments, likewise, must be trained as the framework is developed.

Summary

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Campaign assessments can be significantly useful to the commander.

Campaign assessments need to become part of our doctrinal basis.

Standing "Operating force" analytic force structure must exist at echelons above corps to support the deployed commander's decision making process.

Common understanding and training will allow us to be responsive and effective before, during, and after operations.

Establishing the roles, missions, and relationships of the joint operating force and generating force analytic capability is essential to most effectively contribute to the mission and support the commander.

Operations Research Systems Analysts have a strong role to enable Campaign Assessments both through leadership and analytic support to the staff in support of the Commander's assessment.

Does the ORSA community take the lead in Assessments?

A major decision needs to be made by the senior leadership of the ORSA community within DoD. Taking on the role of the lead in how to conduct assessments is not a trivial issue – it will require resources, and no analytical agency is resourced to do this. There is no schoolhouse in any service who owns this role. There is no proponent who ties together the four services, and there is no focal point for the analysis required by the commands in theater.

There is a tremendous ad hoc relationship between analytical agencies and the leadership of these agencies, across the international community, to collaborate to ensure people receive some preparation and some guidance. While these actions are necessary and helpful, it does not negate the need for the assignment of responsibility

In conclusion, the analytic community must engender continuous support for effective and useful assessments as part of the standing operating force – on hand, trained, and ready both in war and in peace. We must apply our own tool sets to build the arguments that demonstrate the benefit of effective and useful assessments. We must build the case to create flexible assessment doctrine to serve as a common basis and start point for individual tailoring to the unique circumstances of the mission and the commander"s needs. The doctrine must leverage lessons-learned. We must build the analytic force structure at echelons above corps so we are trained and ready to support the Combatant Commander prior to kick-off. And, we must train. We must be expeditionary and prepared.